



# Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

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## First Private Health Sector Exhibition Held in Addis

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID)'s Banking on Health Project, funded by the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), has sponsored on June 5 the first ever national Private Health Sector Exhibition in Ethiopia. Following the theme of "Strengthening and Growing Private Practices in the Fight Against TB & HIV/AIDS", the exhibition provided a unique opportunity for nearly 200 rep-

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*Partial view of the Private Health Sector Exhibition*

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## USAID Teams Up with Western Union to Launch can Diaspora Marketplace

**New Business Initiative Seeks Entrepreneurial Ideas from U.S.-based African Diaspora to Spur Economic Opportunity in Homeland**

DENVER, Colo., WASHINGTON, D.C. June 2, 2009 – The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Western Union, a leading global payments network and Ecobank, the Pan-African Bank, are counting on innovative thinking and entrepreneurial ideas to help alleviate poverty in Africa. Today, the organizations launched the

African Diaspora Marketplace (ADM), a business-development program that will support U.S.-based African Diaspora in creating plans for sustainable start-up and established businesses in Sub-Saharan Africa. The program will also provide grant funding to 10-20 small-and-medium businesses with the strongest proposals for boosting

economic opportunity and job creation in Sub-Saharan Africa through Diaspora-driven development.

"The African Diaspora has unique insights into its home countries and the motivation to encourage direct investment into Africa," said Alonzo Fulgham, Acting Administra-

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## First Private Health Sector Exhibition Held in Addis . . .

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representatives of private health clinics, hospitals, supply companies, and financial institutions to meet and share information in support of the growth of a high quality, affordable private health sector responsive to the needs of Ethiopians.

The exhibition, organized in collaboration with the Government of Ethiopia (GoE) and the Medical Association of Physicians in Private Practice, supports the development of the private health sector, and the GoE's partnership with the private health sector to improve safety, affordability and access to critical public health services.

Federal Minister of Health, Tewodros Adhanom, and USAID/Ethiopia Acting Deputy Director Gerald A. Cashion delivered remarks at the opening of the exhibition at Bole Rock Hotel. In his remarks, Dr. Cashion said, "USAID is proud to sponsor this exhibition that will enable private medical clinic and hospital owners to obtain essential information, contacts, and inputs to help them sustain and improve their businesses."



*Presentations by health providers, healthcare management experts, banks and government representatives were also held at the exhibition.*

A variety of commercial representatives and exhibitors are participating in the Private Health Sector Exhibition including: medical equipment suppliers, pharmaceutical suppliers and distributors, insurance companies, professional associations, medical schools, literature and book suppliers, and banks interested in lending to private health providers. The exhibition also had panel presentations and paper presentations by health providers, healthcare management experts, banks, and government representatives.

USAID's Banking on Health project is creating linkages between finan-

cial institutions and private health providers to increase access to finance for private health providers, thus supporting the growth of their private practices.

The U.S. government through PEPFAR is engaging 180 private health clinics and 13 private hospitals in Ethiopia to provide safer and affordable health service. Furthermore, The USG also strengthens the non-medical human capacity of the private health sector through management, accounting and human resource trainings and workshops. ♦

## USAID Teams Up with Western Union to Launch . . .

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tor of USAID. "This is an exceptional opportunity for African Diaspora in the U.S. to help alleviate the disparities surrounding Africa's economic situation." Added Fulgham, "Harnessing the strength of this population, estimated at 1.4 million strong, is critical to reducing poverty in Africa."

"This innovative model for corporate, government and nonprofit collaboration will support entrepreneurial solutions that create jobs and opportunity," said Christina Gold, CEO, Western Union. "Western Union supports migrants' investment in their home countries and also helps to power the world economy through our business model.

Through this program, we can leverage Western Union's expertise on migration trends and our vast network and resources to help create lasting social and economic impact."

"Ecobank is pleased to be a partner in this initiative, as it offers an excellent opportunity for us to come

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## USAID Teams Up with Western Union to Launch . . .

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together with others who are committed to the economic development of Africa," said Arnold Ekpe, Group CEO of Ecobank Transnational Incorporated (ETI), parent company of the Ecobank Group. "For us, the African Diaspora Marketplace is consistent with our objective of reaching out to the millions of Africans resident abroad and encouraging their investment in Africa's future," Ekpe added.

The initiative hopes to demonstrate the impact that entrepreneurs from the world's Diaspora or migrant communities can have on development in their home countries. Throughout the program, the level of support provided to participants and the role that support may play in the development of each enterprise will be monitored. This research will help to identify best practices around the support needed to help small businesses thrive in developing markets.

Proposals must be implemented in one of the following Sub-Saharan African countries where USAID has both on-the-ground presence and potential technical assistance programs for entrepreneurs: Angola, Burundi, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

To participate, candidates must meet the following criteria, among others:

- Must be a member (or members) of the Sub-Saharan African Diaspora living in the United States as a U.S. citizen or permanent resident;

- Must have a local partner in the country of implementation; and

- Grant funding requests should not exceed US\$100,000 and should not be less than US\$50,000.

For a full a list of eligibility criteria, visit [www.diasporamarketplace.org](http://www.diasporamarketplace.org).

A selection committee will review initial proposals and identify qualifying applicants who will be requested to submit a comprehensive business plan for evaluation. To promote success and ensure comparability among submissions, finalists will be provided with guidance and technical assistance in developing their business plans. Finalists will be connected with a full range of business tools and resources, including credit and debt markets, to increase the number of enterprises that can be brought to life, regardless of whether they are selected for grant funding.

Finalists also will be invited to a two-day networking conference in Washington, D.C., where they will present their completed business plans before a review panel consisting of business experts and leaders from the Diaspora community, USAID, other development institutions and private sector companies. The panel will evaluate final business plans and select grant recipients based on criteria that include the business idea and management framework, prospects for sustainability, capacity to leverage Diaspora resources and results orientation.

Following the rigorous two-round review and selection process, 10-20 qualifying entrepreneurs will be awarded grants of US\$50,000 to US\$100,000 each to support the

execution of their business plans. These will be awarded from the initial ADM grant pool of nearly US\$1.5 million, financed jointly by USAID, the Western Union Company and the Western Union Foundation, as well as through Western Union Agent Giving Circles. One Agent Giving Circle, featuring Ecobank Transnational Incorporated (ETI) in Africa and Irv Barr Management in the U.S., already has contributed US\$250,000 to support this initiative. The ADM will facilitate access to technical assistance, as available, capacity building and information on a range of financing options for all finalists.

From June 3rd to July 21st, individuals in the United States can also help in contributing money to the African Diaspora Marketplace funding pool by visiting any participating Western Union® Agent location. Donations can be sent through the Western Union Quick Collect service free of charge to the Academy for Educational Development (AED) account during this period of time.

Now through July 21, 2009, members of the African Diaspora in the U.S. can submit their business proposals at [www.diasporamarketplace.org](http://www.diasporamarketplace.org). Winners will be announced in December 2009. For more information and complete rules, go to [www.diasporamarketplace.org](http://www.diasporamarketplace.org).

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## Pirate Attacks Delay Food Sent to Africans

By Kathryn McConnell  
Staff Writer

**Washington** — If pirate assaults on ships carrying emergency food donations escalate, more than 10 million people in Somalia and other countries in East and Central Africa will go hungry.

That is according to the World Food Programme (WFP), which says that already-high malnutrition rates are likely to climb in 2009.

Every time pirates attack these ships, as happened to the U.S.-owned and -flagged container ship Maersk Alabama on April 8 off the coast of Somalia, it raises the prospect of additional delays. The Alabama's cargo included 4,100 metric tons of corn-soya blend, which is useful in combating malnutrition in children and mothers, and almost 1,000 metric tons of vegetable oil. The food, valued at \$5.3 million, will sustain 300,000 hungry people for one month.

The incident meant that the food aboard the Alabama did not reach the port of Mombasa, Kenya, on schedule. It arrived two days late and was then transported to humanitarian groups for distribution to hungry Somalis, Kenyans and Ugandans, said Peter Smerdon, WFP spokesman in Nairobi, Kenya.

The region drastically needs food because it has been suffering from a combination of droughts and floods, while also experiencing growing numbers of refugees due to ongoing conflict, Smerdon told America.gov.

Smerdon said that if the agency receives sufficient money or food, it



*Sacks of food aid pile up on the beach in Somali.*

plans to feed the more than 10 million people in Somalia, Kenya, Uganda, southern Sudan and the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo who rely on food assistance brought through Mombasa. The United States is the World Food Programme's largest donor.

Mombasa is essential to WFP's operations. More than 500,000 metric tons of food aid arrived there in 2008 aboard more than 200 ships. Nearly 40 percent of that was bound for Somalia. About the same amount went to Kenya. Ten percent was distributed in Sudan. And the final 10 percent went to Uganda and the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, according to Smerdon.

Allan Jury, WFP's director of U.S. relations, told America.gov he finds it troubling that the pirates are interfering with ships over a greater

geographic distance. Where once they attacked ships going to Somalia, he said, "now ships headed to Mombasa also are being threatened."

The attack on the Alabama, 500 kilometers off Somalia, occurred during a regular rotation through the Indian Ocean from southwestern Oman to Djibouti — where WFP maintains warehouses — en route to Mombasa. (The United States does not make concessions or pay ransom to pirates.)

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton wants international partners to develop a more effective response to an unprecedented level of piracy off the Somali coast because it is robbing Africans of much needed support. (See "United States Expands Fight Against Pirates" (<http://www.america.gov/st/peacesec->

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## Pirate Attacks Delay Food Sent to Africans . . .

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### OTHER ATTACKS ON FOOD-AID SHIPS

A week after pirates attacked the Alabama, the Lebanese-owned and Togo-flagged MV Sea Horse was hijacked April 14 by pirates 700 kilometers from Somalia's shores. The Sea Horse had been headed to Mumbai, India, where it was to load 7,300 metric tons of food to take back to Mogadishu under WFP charter, Smerdon said, but had to abort that mission. (Pirates released the ship April 17.)

The Sea Horse was to have been the first WFP-chartered ship to use a new Mumbai-to-Mogadishu transportation corridor; the food program ended up having to charter a different ship to make the journey.

Another attack occurred April 14 when marauders launched rocket-propelled grenades against the U.S.-owned and WFP-chartered Liberty Sun, damaging its hull.

This happened just after the ship had unloaded some of its food donations at the Port of Sudan and had begun steaming toward Mombasa carrying another 27,000 metric tons of maize meal, maize-soya blend, wheat flour, yellow peas and lentils for WFP. The ship managed

to escape the attacking pirates and requested U.S. Navy assistance. The USS Bainbridge sailed to its aid, but the pirates fled before the Navy ship arrived.

On any given day, 30 merchant ships are ferrying food for the hungry under contract with the WFP.

While ships heading to Somali ports are escorted by European Union vessels, those headed to Mombasa with food to be delivered by truck to other countries often do not have escorts, Smerdon said. Somali ports are not large enough to accommodate the large merchant ships that deliver on regular schedules; Mombasa ports are.

It is not unusual for WFP to share cargo space on regularly scheduled merchant ships going to Mombasa. This decision is driven, in part, by a dwindling number of shipping firms willing to risk going to Somalia, as well as the lower cost that comes with shared transportation.

Beyond possible ship damage, loss of crew, and pirate ransom demands, these attacks pose a potential threat to the quality of the food itself. The nutritional value of grain begins to degrade if it is not delivered within a reasonable time, according to Rick Boyle of the Maersk Line Limited, a U.S. subsidiary of Dutch-owned Maersk Lines.

With this in mind, Boyle said, his company has been adapting its op-

erations to reflect the threat from pirates, working on specific self-defense tactics.

See related stories: "Young Mariners Get Up-Close Lesson in Thwarting Pirates ( <http://www.america.gov/st/peacesec-english/2009/May/20090504153005mmkcirreh0.7136804.html> )," "Global Coordination Can Stop Pirates ( <http://www.america.gov/st/peacesec-english/2009/May/20090501133050akllennoccm0.918255.html> )" and "Commercial Fleet Owners Ask U.S. Congress for Solutions on Piracy ( <http://www.america.gov/st/peacesec-english/2009/May/20090508142627akllennoccm0.3703119.html> )."

For more information about transportation issues, see the Economic Impact of Piracy in the Gulf of Aden on Global Trade. ( [http://www.marad.dot.gov/documents/HOA\\_Economic\\_Impact\\_of\\_Piracy.pdf](http://www.marad.dot.gov/documents/HOA_Economic_Impact_of_Piracy.pdf) )

*(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦*

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## Congolese Soccer Player Scores for Oregon College

By Crystal G. Ofori  
Staff Writer

**Washington** — Congo-born Danny Mwanga, a graduate of Jefferson High School in Portland, Oregon, was recruited by Oregon State University as one of the top-rated soccer forwards in the United States in 2008. (The game known as “football” worldwide is known as “soccer” in the United States.) For Danny, scoring soccer goals was the easy part; verifying his transcripts from schools in his war-torn homeland proved much more difficult.

Producing an authentic secondary school transcript from his school in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was a requirement for playing on the Oregon State University team, as mandated by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). At first that seemed like an impossible task. But, with the guidance of a U.S. Department of State official, Mwanga overcame the hurdles and joined the team. How did the State Department get involved? It is a story of hard work, persistence — and soccer.

“Soccer is all my life,” Mwanga told America.gov. “I don’t think I [could] be where I am right now without it.”

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo and most of Africa, soccer is part of everyday life. Mwanga has been playing soccer since he was young; by the age of 6, he was playing against older players. It was then he learned an important lesson.

“My uncle [and coach] was always



*Congo-born Danny Mwanga plays on the Oregon State University soccer team.*

pushing me and giving me support, telling me to keep my head up and go as hard as I could and also to never back down.” For Danny, that advice became motivation and mantra, both on and off the field.

### THE PERSONAL COST OF WAR

In 1997, Danny’s childhood changed dramatically as the Democratic Republic of the Congo erupted in civil war. In the chaos caused by a power struggle between long-time strongman Mobutu Sese Seko and rebel leader Laurent Kabila, thousands died or were displaced. Danny lost his father during the war, and his mother had to leave

him and his sisters behind with their grandmother.

Despite the hardships, soccer brought him and other kids comfort, Mwanga said. “We were all worried about what was going on at that time. Soccer was the only thing that was bringing a smile to everyone’s face, bringing us all together.”

In 2006, Mwanga was reunited with his mother in the northwestern U.S. state of Oregon. Life in the United States was not an easy transition. “Compared to my home country, the culture, the language ... it was really hard for me to express myself,” Mwanga said. “It was pretty much like I was starting everything over.”

One thing that did not change was soccer. Mwanga began playing for the Westside Metros, a youth soccer team in Beaverton, Oregon, to improve his skills and get used to the American style of the game. His team won two consecutive state championships.

Mwanga’s stellar record at Jefferson High School and his 2007 performance with the all-star Adidas Elite Soccer Program helped him become one of the graduating forwards most recruited by U.S. universities, including Oregon State University, whose men’s soccer team was coached by Dana Taylor.

Taylor recruited Mwanga for the team. “It was one of the best signings in the history of our program. He’s fast, strong, amazingly skilled and [has] a vision for the game that most players don’t have,” Taylor said.

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## U.S. Courts Form Juries to Maintain Impartiality

**By Stefano Rivolta**  
**Staff Writer**

**Washington** — In the U.S. criminal justice system, the opinions of twelve citizens play a crucial role.

The panel of citizens observes the trial, then deliberates on whether the accused is guilty. To be on the panel, commonly known as the jury, U.S. citizens are selected and screened through a process known as voir dire. Paula Hannaford-Agor, director of the Center for Jury Studies in Williamsburg, Virginia, translates the 14th-century French law term as “to see, to speak.”

During the voir dire process, jurors are questioned by both the prosecution lawyers and defense lawyers in front of the judge of the case, to evaluate “their ability to be fair and impartial as a matter of law.” According to Hannaford-Agor, the U.S. justice system holds the presumption that lawyers are “the best in position to know” of situations arising in a trial that lead to bias or prejudice within a jury.

If the trial’s judge finds that a potential juror is not able to serve fairly and impartially, the judge can remove the candidate from consideration. Hannaford-Agor said these “strike for causes” are usually based on legal definitions such as a relationship to an active member in the trial, financial interest in the outcome of the case, or a clear indication of bias or prejudice. A judge can strike for cause any number of jurors, but rarely are more than 10

percent of the potential jurors struck, Hannaford-Agor said.

Additionally, lawyers have the option to exercise a “peremptory strike,” which allows them to remove potential jurors for any reason or no reason at all. Before voir dire begins, the judge sets a limit to how many peremptory strikes lawyers can use.



*This jury box has seats for 12 jurors and two alternates, who serve on the jury if a juror is incapacitated or removed from the jury.*

The tactics used in the cross-examination of the potential jurors rely on the ability of the lawyer to ask the right questions and, in a way, lead the individual into revealing something that he or she may not want to reveal. Lawyers are responsible for the de-selection of “jurors who are not able or willing to consider the lawyer’s side of the dispute,” Hannaford-Agor said, rather than the selection of those who can. Lawyers look for jurors who may have life experiences that could lead to prejudices against the lawyer’s client or witnesses.

Bias and prejudice cannot be eliminated when different people come together on a single decision, but the lawyers strive to minimize these factors. Impartiality, as Hannaford-Agor defines it, verifies that the attitudes of the jurors are “not so domineering” that the lawyers’ arguments and presentation of evidence are not considered.

The voir dire process can take from under an hour to a number of days, depending on the severity of the issues and incidents. Besides the case’s severity, the location of the case affects the timeline of the process, varying from state to state.

Regarding serious cases like first degree murder, where the federal government and many states can impose the death penalty, Hannaford-Agor said, “only persons who are morally capable of considering the imposition of a death” are qualified to serve on the jury.

Those qualified go through an extensive voir dire process, determining if the jurors have moral or religious beliefs that would not allow them to sentence someone to death. This process does the same for those who believe in the opposite, that all capital cases should end with the defendant’s death.

About 2 percent of all American cases are solved with a jury trial, Hannaford-Agor said.

*(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦*

## U.S. Emergency Room Answers Mariners' Calls for Help

By Chris Connell  
Special Correspondent

**Washington** — When the Maersk Alabama was beset by pirates in the dangerous waters off Somalia in April, emergency room doctors at a hospital in Washington began preparing to assist in any medical treatment and evacuation of the crew that might be needed once the vessel reached port in Mombasa, Kenya.

The 17-ton container ship is one of 220 oceangoing vessels to look to an unusual, around-the-clock telemedicine program at George Washington University Medical Center for help in navigating medical emergencies.

In this case, none of the crew was injured. With a U.S. Navy escort, crew members made it to port unharmed, while Navy SEALs rescued Captain Richard Phillips by shooting the pirates holding him captive on a lifeboat.

But the contingency planning that the doctors in Washington did with the ship's owners was one of the services provided by the hospital's 20-year-old Maritime Medical Access program, which gives mariners advice on how to treat problems from cysts to heart attacks. Maersk Line Limited of Norfolk, Virginia, has 31 commercial ships in its own fleet and operates 20 others for the U.S. Navy's Military Sealift Command. Its U.S. crews are covered under the Maritime Medical Access program.

Dennis Houghton, maritime personnel director for Maersk, said the company was able to stay in continuous contact with the ship and "was aware of the condition of the



*Michael Hite (left) and Dr. Neal Sikka with Scott Crawford at the console in the program's Worldwide Communications Center.*

crew during the situation. Fortunately, none of the crew required medical evacuation." But Maritime Medical Access helped arrange for two medical professionals with extensive experience in post-trauma stress to accompany the Maersk team that flew to Kenya to greet the Maersk Alabama, Houghton said.

Maersk has had other incidents in which timely medical advice from these emergency room doctors helped save lives. One incident involved a mariner who thought his shortness of breath and heavy chest was due to a cold. The MMA doctors thought otherwise, advised the ship to get him to shore as soon as possible and "saved the mariner from having a full-blown heart attack," Houghton said.

Most illnesses and injuries aren't that serious. But Dr. Neal Sikka, who oversees all telemedicine programs at the hospital as director of innovative practices, said col-

leagues don't hesitate to recommend that a ship head to port or arrange a helicopter evacuation when life hangs in the balance.

The program also provides medical advice to luxury yachts, fishing vessels and clinics that primarily serve U.S. citizens in remote places such as Antarctica, Greenland and fishing ports in Alaska. The ships in the Maritime Medical Access program are all U.S.-flagged vessels with American crews.

Ships plying the world's oceans carry well-stocked medicine chests "to effectively treat probably 90 percent of the conditions that come up frequently," said Michael Hite, a registered nurse and director of Maritime Medical Access.

By telephone, e-mail and fax, the emergency physicians can walk a ship's medical officer through most illnesses or injuries, Hite said.

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## U.S. Emergency Room Answers Mariners' Calls for Help . . .

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"We know early on what's life threatening and what can wait," said Sikka, one of 30 board-certified emergency physicians at the hospital, the same one that the Secret Service rushed U.S. President Ronald Reagan to after he was shot in a 1981 assassination attempt.

### DOCTORS ON CALL 24/7

The calls for help come into a dedicated communications center in a medical building across from the hospital. Technicians typically field six to 10 calls or e-mails for help daily. They quickly patch calls through any hour of day or night to an emergency physician.

The center tracks ships' locations on a Google Earth map shown on two large computer screens, with anchor-shaped icons pinpointing each ship. Center employees know where the best medical facilities are

near each distant port.

Bumps and bruises are routine; the possibility of bloodshed at the hands of pirates is not. "But we've always been on standby for anything that comes up," Sikka said. "We've made our physicians aware that they might see ... a gunshot wound."

Clients such as Maersk pay an annual fee for this service. They are not charged by the call.

The transmission of digital pictures over the Internet gives the physicians an additional diagnostic tool. "It's great for abscesses or lacerations," Hite said. "They can send us a picture, and we are able to mark and draw ... the shape of the incision. It gives that medical officer a much clearer understanding of how to proceed."

Appendicitis cases often pose the thorniest problems. What first sounds like a bellyache may prove

far more serious, Sikka said. Guiding a medical officer with limited training through a hands-on examination and making the correct call is something that emergency physicians are uniquely qualified to do.

Ship owners, of course, want to keep their huge cargo ships on course and on time. "While we try to keep the corporate goals of continued operation in mind, our main focus is on patient safety," Hite said. When a life is at stake, the physicians do not hesitate to advise a captain to head for the nearest port. But one thing they cannot do, he added wistfully, is "make the boat go any faster."

*(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦*

## Congolese Soccer Player Scores for Oregon College . . .

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### AN EXERCISE IN DIPLOMACY

Oregon State signed Mwanga in 2008, but he was ineligible to play in intercollegiate competition because his academic transcripts from the Democratic Republic of the Congo could not be verified. Then Associate Head Coach Paul Meehan tackled the problem, contacting the U.S. State Department after searching the Internet for resources.

His inquiry reached a State Department official who handles Central African affairs. That official sized

up the problem and, working with Meehan, other State Department colleagues and the Embassy of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in Washington, helped verify Mwanga's transcript in time to meet NCAA deadlines.

Thanks to their efforts, Mwanga was eligible for play in September 2008, and at the end of the 2008 season he was named freshman soccer player of the year in the Pacific 10 Conference, a "rare achievement in one of the hardest conferences in the country," according to Taylor.

Today, Mwanga juggles the de-

mands of his life as a student-athlete and hopes for a professional sports career. In the meantime, he is grateful for the opportunity to pursue his education and to play soccer at the collegiate level.

"I thank God every day for giving me such a gift, and I know that it has the ability to take me even further," Mwanga told America.gov.

*(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>)♦*

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## Many Muslims Saw Hope, Change in Obama's Cairo Speech

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.  
Staff Writer

**Washington** — “The speech gave me hope that change can happen, especially by collaboration and by seeing common ground and interest,” 19-year-old Ingy Hassieb said. The Egyptian college student reflected on the words he had heard when the new American president, Barack Obama, came to Cairo with the call to initiate “a new beginning between the United States and Muslims.”

President Obama chose to make a speech to Muslims around the world from the historic campus of Cairo University on June 4, keeping a pledge he had made during his presidential campaign. Reaching across the world by every means that a technological age offers, Obama delivered a 55-minute speech that was interrupted 42 times by applause from the more than 3,000 people jammed into the university's Great Hall. The speech was co-hosted by Al-Azhar University and Cairo University.

“For over a thousand years, Al-Azhar has stood as a beacon of Islamic learning, and for over a century, Cairo University has been a source of Egypt's advancement. And together, you represent the harmony between tradition and progress. I'm grateful for your hospitality, and the hospitality of the people of Egypt. And I'm also proud to carry with me the goodwill of the American people, and a greeting of peace from Muslim communities in my country: Assalaamu alaykum,” Obama said in his opening remarks. Speaking of President Obama's call for change in the often strained re-

lationship with Muslims worldwide, Hassieb said that “even if it is a slow process, it is not impossible,” according to news reports.

For Jordanian student Sulafah Al Shami, Obama's speech offered a glimpse of America she had not seen before and one that she found “refreshing.”

“It is great to see an American president advocating world diplo-

“was moderate and tailored to both sides; a child, whether Palestinian or Israeli, has every right to a decent life.”

Tarek Ali, a 44-year-old government driver in Cairo, said he did not expect Obama to go as far as he did in seeking to change the climate between Muslims and the United States. “He really seems to want to move forward,” Ali said, according to the Washington Post. Ahmed

Abdullah, a communications worker in Baghdad, said it was the first time he had seen a U.S. president speaking so directly and plainly to Muslims.

One of the points the president emphasized in his speech was a desire to break down old stereotypes. “Just as Muslims do not fit a crude stereotype, America is not the crude stereotype of a self-interested empire,” the president said.



*Audience members listen as US President Barack Obama delivers his landmark address to the Muslim world in the Grand Hall of Cairo University in Cairo. (AFP/Saul Loeb)*

macy and partnership instead of reinforcing the image of America as an overpowering superpower who everybody should submit to,” Al Shami said, according to a New York Times news report.

Dhaka University political science professor Shariful Islam in Bangladesh told America.gov that it is a “charismatic speech by a charismatic world leader, Barack Obama, who leaves the most influence on human hearts across the globe. This is an overwhelming desire on the part of the [United States] to truly address a difficult issue” in improving relations between Muslims and the United States. Samura Atallah, a 20-year-old Palestinian, said the section of the speech dealing with the Israeli-Palestinian peace process

In the Palestinian Territories, a Bethlehem mother, Raheeda Hamad, told Time magazine that she approved of the president's message of a global partnership and the necessity for equal education for women. Nablus University political scientist and Islamic scholar Abdul Sattar Qasim said, “His speech was very close to the heart. He has a way of speaking directly to the people, something other leaders have forgotten.”

What foreign affairs decisions should President Obama consider? Comment on America.gov's blog ( <http://blogs.america.gov/campaign/2009/01/21/day-2-what-should-obama%e2%80%99s-top-priorities-be/> ). ♦

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## Obama Says U.S. Seeks New Beginning with Muslims Worldwide

By Ahmed Mohamed  
Staff Writer

**Washington** — “Assalaamu alaykum,” said President Obama, beginning a speech in Cairo June 4 entitled “A New Beginning.” The widely anticipated speech was co-hosted by Cairo University and Al-Azhar University, and broadcast worldwide. The purpose of the speech was to turn a new page in relations between the United States and Muslims around the world, the president said.

Throughout his remarks, President Obama cited a respect for, as well as acknowledgment of, the importance of Islam. He cited his appreciation for the role that Islam has

played in America’s history, dating back to Morocco’s place as the first country to recognize America after its war of independence. He quoted the second U.S. president, John Adams, who wrote, “The United States has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion or tranquility of Muslims.”

One important theme mentioned throughout the speech was tolerance. Obama emphasized that “Islam has a proud tradition of tolerance. We see it in the history of Andalusia and Cordoba during the Inquisition. I saw it firsthand as a child in Indonesia, where devout Christians worshiped freely in an overwhelmingly Muslim country. That is the spirit we need today.”

The president asserted that “America is not — and never will be — at war with Islam.” As he acknowledged the peaceful nature of



*President Obama speaks at Cairo University*

Islam, he recalled: “The Holy Koran teaches that whoever kills an innocent, it is as if he has killed all mankind; and whoever saves a person, it is as if he has saved all mankind. The enduring faith of over a billion people is so much bigger than the narrow hatred of a few. Islam is not part of the problem in combating violent extremism — it is an important part of promoting peace.” He also spoke about his commitment to “fight against negative stereotypes of Islam wherever they appear.” He added: “As a student of history, I also know civilization’s debt to Islam. It was Islam that carried the light of Renaissance and Enlightenment.”

Obama described how Muslims are a part of a diverse America and the significant role that Muslim Americans have played in American life. “Since our founding, American Muslims have enriched the United

States. They have fought in our wars, served in government, stood for civil rights, started businesses, taught at our Universities, excelled in our sports arenas, won Nobel Prizes, built our tallest building, and lit the Olympic Torch. And when the first Muslim American was recently elected to Congress, he took the oath to defend our Constitution using the same Holy Koran that one of our Founding Fathers — Thomas Jefferson — kept in his personal library.”

The speech also addressed issues that have led to tension, such as extremism, the situation between Israelis and Palestinians and the Arab world, shared interest in the rights and responsibilities of nations on nuclear

weapons, democracy, freedom of religion, women’s rights and economic opportunity.

Regarding extremism, Obama said: “So America will defend itself respectful of the sovereignty of nations and the rule of law. And we will do so in partnership with Muslim communities which are also threatened. The sooner the extremists are isolated and unwelcome in Muslim communities, the sooner we will all be safer.”

Obama expressed his view on Israel, Palestine and the Arab world, by saying, “The only resolution is for the aspirations of both sides to be met through two states, where Israelis and Palestinians each live in peace and security,” and he urged Arab nations to do more to achieve peace with Israel.

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## Obama Says U.S. Seeks New Beginning with Muslims Worldwide . . .

(Continued from page 11)

He was critical of Israel's policy of settlement construction on Palestinian lands, parts of which the Palestinians envision as their future state. "At the same time, Israelis must acknowledge that just as Israel's right to exist cannot be denied, neither can Palestine's. The United States does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements. This construction violates previous agreements and undermines efforts to achieve peace. It is time for these settlements to stop."

The president also touched on nuclear weapons and Iran. "For many years, Iran has defined itself in part by its opposition to my country, and there is in fact a tumultuous history between us. In the middle of the Cold War, the United States played a role in the overthrow of a democratically elected Iranian government. Since the Islamic Revolution, Iran has played a role in acts of hostage-taking and violence against U.S. troops and civilians. This history is well known. Rather than remain trapped in the past, I've made it clear to Iran's leaders and people that my country is prepared to move forward. The question now is not what Iran is against, but rather what future it wants to build."

"I understand those who protest that some countries have weapons that others do not. No single nation should pick and choose which nation holds nuclear weapons. That is why I strongly reaffirmed America's commitment to seek a world in which no nations hold nuclear weapons. And any nation — including Iran — should have the right to access peaceful nuclear power if it

complies with its responsibilities under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty."

### DEMOCRACY PROMOTION

Obama said there has been controversy about the U.S. promotion of democracy, especially regarding U.S. efforts in Iraq. "No system of government can or should be imposed by one nation on any other," he said. But he also said: "That does not lessen my commitment, however, to governments that reflect the will of the people. Each nation gives life to this principle in its own way, grounded in the traditions of its own people."

Obama added that "freedom of religion is central to the ability of peoples to live together" and that "faith should bring us together."

While Obama acknowledged that there is a healthy debate on women's rights, he asserted, "It is no coincidence that countries where women are well educated are far more likely to be prosperous." As the father of two daughters, he said, "I am convinced that our daughters can contribute just as much to society as our sons. Our common prosperity will be advanced by allowing all humanity — men and women — to reach their full potential."

President Obama said economic development must be based on education and innovation, the "currency of the 21st century," and "we will expand exchange programs, and increase scholarships, like the one that brought my father to America, while encouraging more Americans to study in Muslim communities. And we will match prom-

ising Muslim students with internships in America; invest in online learning for teachers and children around the world; and create a new online network, so a teenager in Kansas can communicate instantly with a teenager in Cairo."

Obama concluded his speech by saying: "We have the power to make the world we seek, but only if we have the courage to make a new beginning, keeping in mind what has been written. The Holy Koran tells us, 'O mankind! We have created you male and a female; and we have made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another.'

"The people of the world can live together in peace. We know that is God's vision. Now that must be our work here on Earth.

"Thank you. And may God's peace be upon you."

The transcript of Obama's remarks ( <http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/June/20090603171549eafas0.6576807.html> ) is available on America.gov.

*(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦*

## Obama: D-Day Changed an Entire Century

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.  
Staff Writer

**Washington** — It was unknowable on June 6, 1944, but much of the progress that defined the 20th century began when Allied forces stormed a slice of French beach only six miles long and two miles wide, President Obama said in a speech commemorating the 65th anniversary of the World War II D-Day landings.

"What we must not forget is that D-Day was a time and a place where the bravery and the selflessness of a few was able to change the course of an entire century," Obama said at the elegantly maintained American Cemetery above Omaha Beach near Colleville-sur-Mer in Normandy. Unlike the overcast day 65 years ago, the afternoon commemoration took place under beautiful skies.

It was at Omaha and similar beaches with code names like Juno, Sword, Gold and Utah and at Point du Hoc that the Allied armies of Britain, Canada, Poland, the Free French and the United States landed in the largest amphibious landing in modern history, aided by daring behind-the-lines airborne landings of American and British paratroopers.

The president was joined at the commemoration by the political leaders of France, Britain and Canada, and thousands of veterans and their families.

"This day marks not only the triumph of freedom, but it also marks how the trans-Atlantic alliance has allowed for extraordinary prosperity and security on both sides of the Atlantic," Obama said at a press



*Arriving for the ceremony are Prince Charles, Nicolas Sarkozy, Stephen Harper, President Obama, Gordon Brown and Daniel Reese.*

conference with French President Nicolas Sarkozy in Caen before the ceremonies in Normandy.

The president's speech marked the end of a five-day, four-nation international tour that began in Saudi Arabia, then on to Egypt, Germany and France. In Germany Obama toured the Buchenwald concentration camp with German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel, who survived internment in the camp. Obama was joined at Normandy by first lady Michelle Obama, French President Sarkozy and his wife, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and his wife, and Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his wife. Also joining the official party was Prince Charles of Britain.

But the president said the most important guests were the Allied veterans who were able to attend. "Long after our time on this Earth has passed, one word will still bring forth the pride and awe of men and

women who will never meet the heroes who sit before us: D-Day," the president said.

### MIDDLE EAST AND NUCLEAR WEAPONS

At the Caen press conference, Obama and Sarkozy told reporters they agreed to push ahead in efforts for a two-state solution for Middle East peace and to oppose efforts by Iran to develop nuclear weapons.

"I said to the president that we totally agreed with him on the Israeli and Palestinian issue: two states that need to live alongside one another, an Israeli state whose security we're very attached to and a secure Palestinian state," Sarkozy said.

Obama thanked Sarkozy for his leadership on a range of issues and the often difficult diplomacy involved. "That kind of approach I

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## U.S. Seeking Strong Response to North Korea's Nuclear Actions

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.  
Staff Writer

**Washington** — Not taking significant and effective action against North Korea's recent "provocative and belligerent behavior" to test a nuclear weapon and launch repeated short-range missiles could spark an arms race in Northeast Asia that nobody wants, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says.

"Part of what we're doing is ... sharing with other countries our calculus of the risks and the dangers that would lie ahead if we don't take very strong action," Clinton said June 7 on ABC News' This Week.

The secretary held talks with South Korean Foreign Minister Yu Myung-Hwan in Washington June 5. At the same time, Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg held meetings in Beijing with Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi, State Councilor Dai Bingguo and Vice Foreign Minister Wu Dawei, who is also China's senior North Korea envoy. Steinberg also met with South Korean officials in Seoul.

President Obama is scheduled to meet with South Korean President Lee Myung-bak in Washington June 16, the White House announced June 8.

North Korea conducted an underground nuclear explosion on May 25 (9 p.m. EDT May 24) and test-fired three short-range, ground-to-air and ground-to-ship ballistic missiles. On May 26, North Korea test-fired two more short-range missiles from its east coast missile test facility. North Korea has fired a sixth short-range missile since then. The

U.N. Security Council on May 25 unanimously condemned North Korea's nuclear test, including strong objections from China and Russia.

Clinton said she has been in close communication with foreign ministers of the other nations engaged in the Six-Party Talks that are trying



*Secretary Clinton, right, met with South Korean Foreign Minister Yu Myung-Hwan in Washington June 5.*

to convince the North Korean regime not to pursue development of a nuclear weapons program. The talks include China — which hosts the talks — North and South Korea, Japan, Russia and the United States. The ultimate objective is a nuclear weapons-free Korean Peninsula.

And if North Korea tries to make shipments of its nuclear technology or related weapons, then the United States could seek help from its allies to cut off those shipments. Clinton said that "we will do everything we can to both interdict it and prevent it, and shut off their flow of money."

Clinton also said the State Department is reviewing a 2008 decision by the Bush administration that removed North Korea from the U.S. list of international state sponsors of terrorism.

"We're going to look at it. There's a process for it," she said.

"Obviously, we would want to see recent evidence of their support for international terrorism."

The secretary said that because of North Korea's recent actions, it has unified the other members of the Six-Party process.

Washington has been in talks with the Security Council in New York to issue a new and stronger set of sanctions against North Korea that would include an arms embargo and other measures possibly with the full support of China and Russia, Clinton said.

Previous efforts to halt North Korea's international financial transactions when it has tested a nuclear weapon and launched long-range missiles have proved highly successful, preventing Pyongyang from easily moving money around.

President Obama said June 6 at a joint press conference with French President Nicolas Sarkozy in Caen, France, that North Korea's "actions over the last several months have been extraordinarily provocative and they have made no bones about the fact that they are testing nuclear weapons, testing missiles that potentially would have intercontinental capacity."

"We are not intending to continue a policy of rewarding provocation. I don't think that there should be an assumption that we will simply continue down a path in which North Korea is constantly destabilizing the region and we just react in the same ways," the president said. ♦



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## U.S. Freedom of Information Act Seen as Good Model for Others

By Jim Fisher-Thompson  
Staff Writer

**Washington** — A 43-year-old law for keeping the U.S. government open and transparent, the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), is a model for other nations, says Tom Blanton, director of the National Security Archive (NSA), a nongovernmental organization (NGO) that uses FOIA to collect and publish declassified documents.

"The principle of free information is vital" to a functioning democracy, Blanton told America.gov during a June 1 interview in his office at George Washington University.

Since FOIA's inception in 1966, the federal government has released millions of documents requested by individuals, corporations and NGOs. The law, which applies to all agencies in the executive branch of government, is administered by the Department of Justice. Exemptions to FOIA include certain classified foreign relations documents, national defense information and proprietary business information and trade secrets. (See "Freedom of Information Is Bedrock of Free and Open Societies ( <http://www.america.gov/st/usg-english/2009/June/200906051629441ejrehsiFO.8537561.html&distid=ucs> ).")

Blanton said FOIA is not just for journalists, researchers and scholars. "Senior citizens, military veterans and businesses make up the bulk of requests for government information" in the United States, he said.

### A "CHECK ON POWER"

The United States' FOIA process has been a model for nations that have developed similar laws, Blanton said. "And we have also used the process to get more closed societies like Cuba, Vietnam and Russia to open up their government archives," he said.

Blanton said there has been "an

openness revolution," particularly in the 1990s when the number of countries that have FOIA-type laws "went from about a dozen to today, about 80."

Since its founding in 1985, NSA has made more than 37,000 FOIA requests. In 2008 alone, NSA filed 1,200 requests, resulting in the release of 62,000 pages of documents.

Blanton said NSA advocates for the release of documents primarily to open a window into government decision-making, "in order to broaden the historical record."

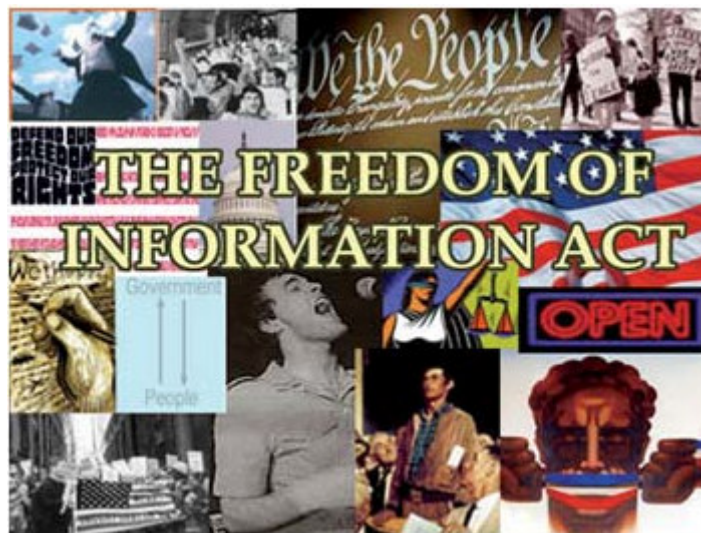
"Basically, we have become an institutional memory for FOIA," he added, and the NSA archive now ranges from documents shedding new light on the

Cuban missile crisis of the early 1960s to the Iran-Contra affair of the 1980s.

"One of our biggest coups," Blanton said, was recently winning a lawsuit forcing the government to save White House e-mail from President Reagan's time in office in the 1980s. "The National Archives did not define e-mails as records, and so without our lawsuit, e-mails in electronic form would not have been preserved." (The National Archives and Records Administration is the official record keeper for the United States.)

A considerable body of records was

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## U.S. Freedom of Information Act Seen as Good Model for Others. . .

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at issue in the lawsuit, he said: 130,000 to 200,000 White House e-mail messages in the Reagan years; 200,000 to 500,000 under President George H.W. Bush; and 32 million from President Bill Clinton. The estimate from President George W. Bush's administration is 220 million e-mails.

"Nobody is going to be able to look at every page, but since they are in electronic form, you'll be able to use algorithms and search engines to find information," Blanton explained.

### FOIA'S IMPACT OVERSEAS

Blanton said, "Another big success has been taking documents we've gotten through the American FOIA to foreign countries that are still largely closed, like China, Cuba, Vietnam" and Russia after the fall of communism.

"Showing them what American documents say threatens to tell the history from our perspective rather than theirs, and this poses an interesting challenge for them to open up," he explained.

"We did just such a presentation for [Cuban] President Fidel Castro in 1992 with about 20,000 pages of American documents we retrieved through FOIA," Blanton said.

"Castro's response was to snap his fingers and three guys came out with archival boxes, and he proceeded to pull out documents, exclaiming things like: 'Oh, what about that letter [Soviet leader Nikita] Khrushchev sent me apologizing for taking out the missiles without telling me beforehand.' Nobody had ever heard of that in Western historiography."

Some of these meetings with leaders of more closed societies actually have led to unveiling of new information, Blanton said. "For example, from the Gorbachev Foundation

[founded by Mikhail Gorbachev, former president of the Soviet Union] we got the transcript of his meeting with President George H.W. Bush at Malta [in December 1989]; the American version is still classified and has not yet been released."

Malcolm Byrne, NSA deputy director and director of research, said NSA was also working with a number of countries to help develop or strengthen their own FOIA laws. He mentioned that Blanton and an NSA team recently visited Georgia and are working with lawmakers there to set up a functioning information-access process.

NSA has also helped train journalists and others on how to use FOIA laws to investigate stories. The training aims to encourage journalists to lessen their mistrust for government by seeing how they can work with the government to gain access to information. ♦

## Obama: D-Day Changed an Entire Century . . .

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think is serving the interest of France, but it's also serving the interest of the world, and we're very grateful for that," Obama said.

Sarkozy, who met recently with the Iranian foreign affairs minister, said he told the minister to accept the outstretched hand of friendship and cooperation offered by Obama and set a meeting with the six nations that are struggling to convince Iran not to develop nuclear weapons, and that they are aligned if Iran wants to access civilian nuclear energy. France, Britain, Germany,

Russia, China and the United States have been working closely together to resolve issues related to Iran's nuclear ambitions.

Obama said his administration is breaking with past practices and has offered to have direct talks with Iran. "We are saying we are willing to have direct negotiations with the Iranians on a whole range of issues without preconditions, in an atmosphere of mutual respect and resolve," Obama told reporters.

The president also said that North Korea's actions in the last several months have been "extraordinarily

provocative."

Transcripts of Obama's and Sarkozy's comments in Caen ( <http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/June/20090606145336ptellivremoso.2221491.html> ) and of Obama's speech at the Normandy American Cemetery ( <http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/June/20090606152420ptellivremoso.2632655.html> ) are available on America.gov. ♦

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## Freedom of Information Is Bedrock of Free and Open Societies

**By Jim Fisher-Thompson**  
**Staff Writer**

**Washington** — The 43-year-old Freedom of Information Act is considered a bulwark of democracy by scholars, journalists and common citizens seeking information held by the U.S. government.

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), enacted in 1966 and refined over the years, allows individuals and organizations (including non-U.S. citizens and groups) to request access to unpublished documents held by the executive branch of the federal government without having to provide a reason for the request.

When FOIA first was enacted, it was considered revolutionary. Only Finland and Sweden had similar legislation. Since then, about 80 nations have created similar laws, says Tom Blanton, director of the National Security Archive, a leading U.S. research institute that collects and publishes information gathered through FOIA requests.

President Lyndon Johnson was not enthusiastic about signing the act requiring the executive branch of the U.S. government to make many documents available upon request by the public. Many officials felt the transparency called for by FOIA would constrain them from communicating sensitive information in documents, thereby hampering government functions.

Since its inception, FOIA has become a popular tool of inquiry for journalists, scholars, businesses, lawyers, consumers and environmental groups. It has helped bring openness to the workings of government.

Areas of information that are exempt for release under FOIA include: personal privacy information, certain classified national defense and foreign relations matters, and trade and business secrets. The law does not apply to the two other branches of the U.S. government — the judicial (federal courts) and legislative (Congress) — or states. Individual states have their own FOIA-type laws that cover state government information.

In 1996, FOIA went digital when Congress revised the law to provide for public access to information in electronic form. Federal agencies provide information online on how to make requests for documents.

On his second day in office, January 21, President Obama instructed the Department of Justice to further enhance accessibility of information to the public. Attorney General Eric Holder, whose department oversees the handling and administration of FOIA requests among federal agencies, issued a set of guidelines on March 19 implementing Obama's order.

Calling Obama's directive "a sea change in the way transparency is viewed across the government," Holder said FOIA "reflects our nation's fundamental commitment to open government" and the new guidelines are "meant to underscore that commitment and to ensure that it is realized in practice."

The new guidelines, which apply to all executive branch agencies, include a requirement that when responding to an information request, agencies should ask: "What can I release?" An agency should not

withhold information simply because it is technically allowed to do so.

The guidelines also call for:

- Releasing records in part when they cannot be released in full.

- Ensuring discretionary release of documents when possible.

- Working cooperatively with requests and responding promptly.

- Better reporting by agency FOIA personnel to the Department of Justice.

The new guidelines aim to make the FOIA process more efficient and quicker. In 2006, the 30 federal agencies with the largest volume of requests reported receiving more than 774,000 requests for access to information under FOIA.

### **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION OVERSEAS**

Other nations have seen firsthand the impact of greater government transparency through FOIA-type laws.

The United Kingdom's Freedom of Information Act, passed in 2000 but only implemented over the past few years, recently helped American freelance journalist Heather Brooke expose a government scandal. The journalist, who lives and works in the United Kingdom, used her experience as an investigative reporter in the United States to make FOIA requests on the expense claims of members of Parliament.

Brooke's request kicked off a vigor-

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## U.S. Global Partnerships Key in Fighting Drug-Resistant TB

By Kelly Daniel  
Staff Writer

**Washington** — Thousands of kilometers apart, a classroom in the Philippines, a network of clinics in Brazil and a medical research center in South Korea demonstrate a key element of the United States' response to drug-resistant tuberculosis (TB).

Partnerships — involving governments, the private sector and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) — are critical in global efforts to conquer multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR TB) and extensively drug-resistant TB (XDR TB).

The World Health Organization (WHO) describes drug-resistant TB as a global health "time bomb," with nearly 500,000 new cases of MDR TB reported in 2008. MDR TB occurs when a majority of TB drugs are ineffective; XDR TB, fatal in 53 percent of cases, occurs when no TB drugs are effective.

The United States, the largest single-country donor to the Global Fund against AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, is a leader in anti-MDR TB efforts.

"We must not forget the fact that 1.7 million a year die, guaranteed, like clockwork, with TB," said Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), and one of the United States' leading infectious disease experts.

On June 16–18 in Seattle, the fifth annual Pacific Health Summit, which focuses on MDR TB as a major global health threat, will high-

light the value of partnerships in the fight against drug-resistant TB.

Hundreds of scientists, government officials, corporate leaders and researchers from more than 24 countries (including Peru, South Africa, Japan, Kenya, Switzerland, China, India, Brazil and the United States) will participate.



*China Health Minister Chen Zhu and philanthropist Bill Gates sign agreements for a partnership against tuberculosis.*

"There's a growing sense that collaboration is key to the future of everyone," said Michael Birt, executive director of the summit and director of the Center for Health and Aging at the National Bureau of Asian Research, one of the summit co-founders. "That is a fundamental part of U.S. strategic thinking right now."

### MULTIPLE PARTNERS AT MULTIPLE LEVELS

U.S. government efforts against MDR TB can be found at every level, from local and state governments to federal agencies such as NIAID, the U.S. Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention (CDC), National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Partnerships usually concentrate on the 22 nations with the highest number of TB cases, and focus on finding new drugs and diagnostic tools.

In the Philippines, the CDC and a Filipino tropical disease institute are creating a new MDR TB training framework for health care workers using a yearlong class schedule. Previous CDC training partnerships in Latvia, Malawi, South Africa and Peru centered on one-week, one-time sessions; the new course will be divided into four sessions that build on students' skills.

"That's the model we're probably going to shift to," said Dr. Timothy Holtz, a team leader in the international research branch of the CDC's Division of Tuberculosis Elimination. Holtz is CDC's representative to the Green Light Committee Initiative, an international partnership with WHO and the Stop TB Partnership that seeks new drugs and diagnostic tools to treat MDR TB.

Elsewhere, NIAID and the South Korean government support a research center in Masan, South Korea, that evaluates new anti-TB drugs, and USAID worked with the Brazilian Ministry of Health to increase the number of MDR TB centers in Brazil from 63 in 2004 to 122 in 2007. Other CDC projects include CureTB, a bilateral initiative with Mexico that coordinates TB care on the U.S.-Mexican border.

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Telling America's story

**Freedom of Information Is Bedrock of Free . . .**

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ous debate in the House of Commons on whether the governing Labour Party could get an exemption for expense claims under the new law.

A major British newspaper, the Daily Telegraph, gained access to some of the information and wrote a series of stories identifying 80 members of Parliament as alleged abusers of government expense accounts. The findings led to the resignation of the speaker of the House of Commons.

China is also experiencing greater government transparency after it recently promulgated its Regulations on the Disclosure of Government Information. The year-old law has resulted in more openness, an example being the Ministry of Fi-

nance's decision to publish the government's 2009 budget on the Internet on March 20. More environmental information has been released to the Chinese public over the past year.

Like its U.S. counterpart, the new Chinese FOIA also mandates that government agencies issue an annual public report on their progress in disclosing information to the public.

More information on how federal agencies process FOIA requests ( <http://www.usdoj.gov/oip/index.html> ) is available on the Department of Justice Web site.

*(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>)* ♦

**U.S. Global Partnerships Key in Fighting Drug-Resistant TB . . .**

*(Continued from page 18)*

Efforts involve the private sector as well: The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation signed a \$33 million agreement with China's Ministry of Health in April to work on TB and MDR TB in six Chinese provinces. NIAID also partners with pharmaceutical giant Eli Lilly and Company, researching new drugs as the Lilly Not-For-Profit Partnership for TB Early Phase Drug Discovery.

The U.S. government "can't do everything, nor can we be all things to all people," Fauci said. "So by necessity we had to develop strategic entities and strategic partnerships."

**GROWING GLOBAL RESPONSES**

China, which along with India has

some of the highest levels of MDR TB infection, is strengthening its effort to fight MDR TB. In April, Beijing hosted ministerial-level meetings on MDR TB that emphasized the role of "partners across the health system and beyond" to muster the estimated \$2 billion needed to fight drug-resistant TB during the next two years.

"Controlling drug-resistant TB in India and China will have a direct impact in controlling drug-resistant TB in the United States," Holtz said, given how readily infectious diseases can spread globally.

Scientists, activists and health care providers say they sense a new momentum in the fight against drug-resistant TB, exemplified by the Chinese ministerial meetings, a Stop TB Partnership

meeting in Brazil in February and a World Health Assembly resolution on MDR TB adopted in May even as the H1N1 virus outbreak grabbed headlines.

The Pacific Health Summit is designed to capitalize on that momentum, said Claire Topal, the summit's senior program director. Ultimately, all partners are focused on a key indicator: The global increase of TB cases has slowed somewhat, but the rise of drug-resistant TB has not.

"I think there's reason for hope and optimism that things can get better," Holtz said. "But we are still in the middle of ... a global epidemic on TB." ♦